

CIA Involved in Death Probe?

This dispatch is a joint effort by Daily News Columbus correspondent Robert T. Endicott and New Orleans States-Item staffers Hoke May, Dave Snyder, Ross Yockey and Rosemary James. It is based on weeks of research, investigation and interviews with persons surrounding the New Orleans probe into President Kennedy's assassination.

NEW ORLEANS — Do the long tentacles of the Central Intelligence Agency reach deep into District Atty. Jim Garrison's Kennedy death plot investigation?

There is mounting evidence that they do, and at least one Garrison probe figure intends to use CIA connections as a part of his defense.

Still others linked to the Garrison investigation have been named as acting for the super-secret espionage organization—as informers, as couriers and munitions carriers.

EVEN THE investigation's pivotal figure, 54-year-old Clay L. Shaw, has had CIA connections attributed to him. Shaw, the only man charged with complicity in Kennedy's death, was linked with the CIA by an influential Italian newspaper.

The strongest CIA ties lead to Gordon Novel, 29, a fugitive witness, fighting extradition at Columbus, O.

NOVEL, one-time New Orleans bar owner, and self-styled electronics expert, has told a number of friends and intimates he was a CIA opera-



Garrison



Novel



Shaw

tive and will use the role to battle Garrison's charges.

The defense will be laid down, Novel says, if he is returned to New Orleans to face charges he burglarized an oil service company's explosive bunker in nearby Terrebonne Parish (county).

Novel's attorney at New Orleans, Stephen Plotkin, would not deny his client's reported statements, nor would he confirm them.

Novel is free in Columbus on \$10,000 bond. He was arrested Apr. 1 in suburban Gahanna on Garrison's warrant, charging he helped plan the munitions burglary in 1961.

HE IS ACCUSED of both conspiracy and burglary along with Sergio Arcacha-Smith, Dallas, once the leader of a militant anti-Castro organization in New Orleans. Garrison charges that they conspired with another key JFK probe

figure, David W. Ferrie, to stage the munitions theft.

Ferrie, a former airline pilot, was found dead of what the Orleans parish coroner called "natural causes" five days after Garrison's investigation was made public. The New Orleans DA said Ferrie was "one of history's most important men."

The charges against Novel and Arcacha Smith are spin-offs from Garrison's main investigation. The prosecutor has called Novel "a very important witness" and has filed a fugitive witness warrant against him.

ON THE DAY the munitions were picked up, Novel says, he was called by his CIA contact and told to join a group which was ordered to transport munitions from the bunker to New Orleans. The key to the bunker was provided, he says.

He says he made the trip in

his own automobile and met several people there, all of them acting for the CIA. He identified them as Ferrie, Arcacha-Smith, several Cubans and another figure in the case.

They loaded the boxes of ordnance on trucks, Novel says, and returned to New Orleans where the explosives were dropped in three spots—Ferrie's home, Novel's office building, and the office of former FBI agent and New Orleans police official, Guy Banister, who died of a heart attack in the summer of 1964.

A FRIEND of Banister's, a man considered reliable, told a reporter in New Orleans he saw 50-100 boxes of munitions in Banister's Lafayette Street office early in 1961. Banister was a private detective then, operating a company called "Guy Banister Associates."

Banister's friend said he saw the munitions in a store-

room-office, in boxes marked Schlumberger.

He says five or six of the boxes were open and inside were rifle grenades, land mines, and some "little missiles" of a kind he had never seen before.

The friend said he remonstrated with Banister because "fooling with this kind of stuff could get you in trouble." He added:

"BANISTER SAID, 'No, it was all right,' that he had approval from somebody. He said the stuff would be there overnight, that somebody was supposed to pick it up.

Banister's friend said this happened well before the April Bay of Pigs invasion.

The munitions, Novel says, were picked up and consolidated soon after the New Orleans drops. He says eventually they were taken to Cuba for use in a diversionary operation, staged in conjunction with the Bay of Pigs attack.

Cuban sources in New Orleans say the cadre of Cubans trained by the CIA on the city's West Bank in 1961 was sent to Varacoa to make a diversionary assault. The attack did not come off because Castro militia was waiting and captured the group.

NOVEL'S ACCOUNT of the explosives operation sharply conflicts with Garrison's charges against Arcacha-Smith and Novel. The DA's accusation says the burglary conspiracy took place after Aug. 1, 1961—three months after the Cuban disaster.